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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to help the user enter into the job market by making the most of their existing skills and finding additional training. Section 1, Vocations, Occupations, Careers, looks at the assessment tools used by employers and trainers to prepare people for today's job market. It describes how to develop a personal inventory of skills and knowledge to help select the right combination of training and employment services. Other topics are computers; employability skills; skills assessment; transferable skills; developing a learning portfolio; prior learning assessment and recognition; recognition of foreign credentials; and developing an occupational or career ladder. Section 2, Jobs, Jobs, Jobs: Getting to Know the Labor Market, discusses what a good job is; basic things one needs to know about the labor market; how the labor market works; complete makeover of the service industry; provincial trends; and how to start looking for a job or develop a plan for job training. Section 3, Training and Employment Services: Tools and Checklists, focuses on steps in determining whether to take a training course. It covers developing an action plan; what one's learning style is; new learning technologies; fitting it into one's schedule; what should one look for in a training program; how one can evaluate a training program; and training standards. Ten references, 14 organizational resources, and 5 Internet sites are listed. (YLB)

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CHOOSING TRAINING?

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INTRODUCTION

These days, people are talking a lot about job training. People are also talking about how the economy is changing. You need to look hard for a job. Be ready to move from one job to another.

Some people think that the best thing to do if you need to find a job is to start firing off your resume to dozens of companies. That might work in some cases, but not in most. And it's a very expensive, very frustrating process. Who wants to get all kinds of "thanks but no thanks" replies? Or — what's even harder — no response at all? We think that there is another approach, one that takes a bit more time, planning and preparation. This way you can use the supports, the services and the people who understand what's involved in the world of training and employment services.

Training and education are important tools. With the right training and a solid educational background you can look at a wider range of options in your job search.

You need to be careful that you find the right training program. Before you know which is the best course, you need to think about what type of job you can do.

You need to think about yourself. What type of work do you like to do? What skills are you good in? Do you have personal strengths that might help you in deciding the right type of job?

You will need to look at what's going on in the job market. Are there some occupations which might be better for you? Which industries are likely to grow over the next few years?

The next step is to see where the gaps are. Maybe you're ready to go right away. Do you need any additional training? Has your current occupation changed a lot? Are there new technologies you need to learn how to use? Do you already have most of the skills you need? Should you take a full time course? Or a part time course?

Finally, you will have to find out if you can get help along the way. Many of the training and employment services you will need are available, but you need to know where to go and how to get there. You will need a map and a route to make sure you stay on the right track. And to make sure you stay in the driver's seat until you get to where you want to be.

You'll find out about the basic tools you need to use:

- **assessments**
- **developing a career path**
- **understanding important trends**
- **career development**
- **occupational analysis**
- **labour market information**
- **what to look for in a training course**
- **developing a network**

STEP 1:
GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF

- assessment tools
- identifying your skills
- prior learning assessment & recognition
- developing a skills & knowledge portfolio

STEP 2:
GETTING TO KNOW THE JOB MARKET

- labour market information
- occupations new & old: learning how to read the latest employment trends
- good work - good pay: how much is enough?

STEP 3:
SHOPPING AROUND

- who's out there for me? - a guide to employment services
- what's on offer? & who does what?
- evaluating private trainers, public educational institutions, community-based trainers

VOCATIONS, OCCUPATIONS, CAREERS

In this section, we will look at the assessment tools used by employers and trainers to prepare people for today's job market. You will find out how to develop your own personal inventory of skills and knowledge to help you select the right combination of training and employment services.

Before you begin to think about choosing the right training course, take a good look at yourself. What do you like to do? What do you think you're good at doing? What kinds of activities challenge you in a positive way?

These days, it seems like dreaming just to think about finding a job that will fulfill our personal goals. Getting a job that pays the bills is challenge enough. Some of us end up in jobs that do not allow us to use the skills we have.

Many employers are breaking jobs down into job tasks and competencies. These are more precise ways of measuring what people do and how skilled they are at doing it. Measuring job skills in this way means that it's not enough to say "I'm a receptionist" or "I'm a machine operator". You must show that you have a range of skills you can put to work.

I NEED TO LEARN COMPUTERS!

Practically every place you turn, people are telling you how important computers are. And they are right. Computers are important tools in most jobs. But how much do you need to know? And how up-to-date does the training need to be?

Computer programs are also called 'applications'. Corel Draw is a specific application. So is WordPerfect for Windows. There are many word processing applications, data base applications and spread sheet applications on the market. They change all the time. In fact, they are a lot like cars. Every year there's a new line, even when there was probably nothing wrong with the old line! If you know how to drive a car, then you can probably drive the $75,000 model just as easily as the second-hand '87 model you paid $3500 for. The question is whether you can drive standard or need to stay with an automatic.

Technological change drives a large part of the computer industry, once you get past the fact that the computer companies need us to keep buying their product so they can make money, which is fair game. You need to know the basics – the generic version – so that you can comfortably use the computer as a tool. Here is a short list:

- computer foundations (parts of the system)
- operating systems (DOS, Windows, Windows 95)
- basic applications (word processing, databases, spread sheets)

Computers are being used much more extensively in workplaces today. Computers have been used to create more highly skilled jobs at the professional and managerial level, while eliminating jobs considered semi-skilled and unskilled. White collar jobs now require a higher level of computer literacy.

Occupations using computers & computer-based technologies

- sales people
- teachers
- scientists
- engineers
- analysts
- clerks
- accountants
- librarians
- managers
- cashiers
- servers

Despite all the fuss, very few people have what you could call advanced computer skills. Most jobs require knowledge of basic computerized functions: word processing, record keeping and data entry. Data analysis and computer programming are advanced skills very few people possess.

WHAT ARE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS?

Training programs specialize in a variety of occupational and vocational skills. But before you even consider which occupation is right for you, make sure you've got the basics. These are called 'employability skills'.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS:

Everyone says you need to know computers if you want to get a job in today's market. But there's a bit more to it than that. According to most employers, you need three sets of skills:

- **academic skills**
- **personal management skills**
- **group communication or team skills**

Another set of skills is very important. These are called critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills:

thinking
+
reasoning
+
problem-solving

SKILLS ASSESSMENT

When you talk to a counselor about your work skills, or if you are trying to do it on your own, there are a few basic pointers to consider.

Technical skills: these are skills that are directly related to a job. Training for actual job content teaches a person how to do job tasks. These skills are usually taught in formal, structured academic training. But, like most people, you probably learned your technical job skills on the job itself, from your co-workers or on your own. Technical skills are usually specific to a particular job. For example, knowing how to do arc welding won't necessarily help you to be a travel agent! That's why technical skills are job-specific.

Technical skills are usually accredited in the form of certificates and diplomas. If you have taken a course in accounts management, record filing, administration or health care aide, you should have a credit and/or certificate. But if you learned office procedures or hospitality service on your own on the job, you will need to find a way to record those skills.

Functional skills: these skills include a variety of things, from knowing how to read, edit and design the lay-out of a page for publication all the way to developing a budget on a computerized program for accounts management. Buried in the first set of job tasks is a very fundamental skill: **literacy**. People who write and work with text have advanced literacy skills that allow them to do a variety of jobs. The second example is based on two fundamental skill sets: numeracy and computer literacy. Both sets, in fact all three skill sets, are the foundation for functional skills.

Functional skills are skills which are transferable from one job or task to another. For example, if you can play a computer game then you can operate a computer. You may not be able to work a particular computer application. That's a technical skill: like an accounting clerk operating the computer software accounting package called Quicken. But you do have the functional skill of being computer literate. You need that before you can learn the technical skill of using a computer-based application.

Self-management skills: these skills are in high demand among employers and they are hard to pin down mainly because we take them for granted in much of the unpaid work we do. These skills have a great deal to do with how we see ourselves. And that, as we all know, has a lot to do with how we are treated by the people around us. For example, if you are treated with respect and dignity on your job, you will probably feel good about yourself and the work you do. You will see yourself as someone who can take pride in your work.

Take a look at the following list and you'll see what we mean:[1]

[1] List adapted from Alberta Advance Education & Career Development, Job Search: The Product is You. Learning Resources Distribution Centre (1996): 5.

accepting	entertaining	productive
active	friendly	realistic
assertive	good-natured	reassuring
caring	happy	receptive
cheerful	helpful	self-confident
confident	independent	service-oriented
cooperative	logical	skillful
dependable	organized	steady
disciplined	outgoing	strong
efficient	persistent	thoughtful
energetic	precise	tolerant

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Many of the skills you have developed in your life are useful in all kinds of ways. If you have ever worked with children, with other people, done you own shopping or taught someone how to do something, you have drawn on skills you probably don't even think you possess. Here is a standard list of recognized transferable skills.[2] These are like key words or code words in job descriptions. Try and identify which of these you could say are your strengths.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE SKILLS		
assisting	consulting	enforcing
coaching	counseling	instructing
COMMUNICATION SKILLS		
advising	persuading	summarizing
interpreting	presenting	translating
negotiating	reading	writing
LEADERSHIP SKILLS		
administering	deciding	inspiring
conducting	facilitating	motivating
coordinating	initiating	planning
WORKING WITH INFORMATION & NUMBER SKILLS		
analyzing	inspecting	researching
budgeting	memorizing	reviewing
calculating	ordering	scheduling
evaluating	organizing	selecting

MANUAL AND MECHANICAL SKILLS		
adjusting	installing	repairing
constructing	operating	servicing
CREATIVE SKILLS		
arranging	developing	producing
creating	generating	predicting
demonstrating	improvising	performing

[2] List adapted from Alberta Advance Education & Career Development, Job Search: The Product is You. Learning Resources Distribution Centre (1996): 5.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

WHAT ABOUT PERSONALITY PROFILES AND TESTS?

There are dozens of tests and assessment tools on the market. With the spread of computerized learning technologies, you can find lots of programs that will tell you your personality type, test your competency level, and give you a personalized assessment profile telling you which occupation or vocation you are best suited for. You can even find out what your true colors are!

Many training agencies use these tools. They are cost-effective ways of testing and screening people looking for training. So it's important to know what to expect from these tests.

Just imagine if you were looking to buy a car. You walk into the showroom and the first thing the sales agent does is direct you to a computerized testing program. The test, according to the sales agent, will tell you which kind of car you should buy. If the program was designed to record all your answers about how you wanted to use your car, then the assessment might be a useful way of looking at your **preferences for the future**. But if all the questions asked about how you have used your car in the past, then the assessment is really looking at your driving **experiences in the past.**

The difference is important. We do not always get to choose what we are going to do in the future. But we have no control over what has happened in the past. It's like the difference between a job resume and a Skills & Knowledge Profile.[3] The resume tells people what you have done. Been there. Done that. The Skills & Knowledge Profile tells people what you like to do, what you are interested in doing, and what you would like to be doing in the future.

So why all the fuss? It's simple really. If you are going to be tested, ask lots of questions. What is the test looking at? How is it used? Is this a test of what you've done before or what you might do in the future?

Here are just some examples of tests and assessment tools used by training agencies and institutions.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

This is a personality inventory used in career development and counseling to tell you what type of work you are best suited for, based on your personality type. It is based on the idea that certain jobs call for specific types of people.

Strong Interest Inventory

This package adds up occupational interests, work and leisure activities and uses the summary to guide the person into a career. It attempts to assess levels of confidence as well as interest. The results are then used to develop a guide for a person who is trying to enter the workforce or has to change jobs.

True Colors

The True Colors model is based on the personality-temperament theories used for the Myers-Briggs. True Colors takes it another step to help develop life skills in a group setting. It looks at behaviors, skills, motivations and needs. Group members are shown how to recognize and use basic values like confidence, dignity, pride, worthiness and esteem.

Equivalency Tests

These are assessments that rank skills and knowledge according to standardized levels.

Select-A-Level:

This assessment is a 25 minute multiple choice test. The score is used to determine school grade equivalencies. Grades 1-4 = Level A; Grades 5-8 = Level B; Grades 9-12 = Level C.

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[3] Karen Charnow Lior and D'Arcy Martin, Skills and Knowledge Profile, Learning Capacities in Community and Workplace: An Action-research project, Advocates for Community-Based Training and Education for Women, 1998.

Canadian Adult Achievement Test:

This test is used to assess reading comprehension, vocabulary, math, and sciences. The CAAT is a 3 hour in-depth multiple choice examination.

Tools like the ones described above can be helpful, but do yourself a favor: don't let a test decide your future. You are the only one who should make that decision. Tests and assessments are tools not crystal balls. They can be used as guides or benchmarks. But they can't look deep inside you and tell you the truth about who you are. Use them. Don't let them use you.

DEVELOPING A SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE PROFILE

What's the first thing you do when you go grocery shopping? Well, let's start again. What's the first thing you **should** do? Make a list? Look in the cupboard, see what you need and **then** make a list? Exactly. Why pay for things you already have?

Putting together a Skills & Knowledge Profile is like making a list of the basic items you already have. Sometimes seeing it written down on paper helps you realize how much you already know and how many things you really can do.

Developing a Skills & Knowledge Profile is not the same as developing a resume for a job. The job resume is a record of all the work you have done for pay. The Skills & Knowledge Profile is an inventory of all the things you do and have learned about in every part of your life. This is your chance to think about all the things you know how to do that require a variety of skills.

We do most of our learning from friends, co-workers or by ourselves through trial and error. This is called **informal learning**. Here are some of the places you should start looking:

- home
- hobbies
- church
- sports & recreation
- volunteer activities
- on the job

Do you know how to operate a computer program? Did you take a course? Or did you learn on your own? Many people are learning about computers by playing computer games. Just because it's fun doesn't mean it's not a skill that could be used on the job.

Here are some examples of what we mean.[4]

FAMILY WORK

dependent care, planning & preparing meals, home renovations & repairs, budgeting, scheduling activities, writing letters, giving advice & feed-back, tutoring, dealing with family conflicts, translation & advocacy.

VOLUNTEER WORK

community agency, your child's school, coaching a sports team, working in your union, religious and social activities, helping your neighbors and friends.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES & HOBBIES

gardening, sewing, music, pottery, painting, singing, hockey, hiking, swimming, cooking & baking.

TRAVEL

planning & organizing trips, exploring a new part of the city.

INDEPENDENT READING, LISTENING & VIEWING

recipe books, attending or tuning in to speakers' series, documentaries, reading newspapers & specialist magazines, novels, watching films & videos.

MAJOR EVENTS

Immigrating, having or adopting a child, dealing with a natural disaster or personal crisis, moving, making a public presentation.

DEVELOPING A LEARNING PORTFOLIO: PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT & RECOGNITION (PLAR)

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is a very important process. It's a way of looking at — and showing — what you know and what you can do. PLAR gives you credit for skills you developed in school, in community work, on-the-job training and other life experiences.

Used properly, PLAR can mean that your knowledge and skills are added up and used to give credit for training or education. You may not receive an actual credit, but you can be exempted from having to take a specific course or module. It can also be used as a way of transferring credits from one school or program to another. Or it can be used to demonstrate that you have the knowledge and experience to do a job – even if you do not have the stated qualifications. PLAR saves time and money. It saves you from having to duplicate your training and learning.

PLAR is also a way of receiving academic credit for knowledge and skills you have developed outside the classroom. You can get full or partial credit, usually at the post-secondary level, in a program if the education institution offers PLAR services. Many colleges are beginning to recognize and grant credits for prior learning. PLAR can be used in the following areas:

[4] Adapted from Lior and Martin Skills and Knowledge Profile (1998).

- occupational & career development opportunities
- job skills
- access to post-secondary education

You should be able to get credit for skills you have developed in a variety of places, including on the job, volunteer work, or union education. You could be asked to put together a portfolio of your own work, including examples that demonstrate the skills and knowledge you want to get credit for. You might also be asked to take what is called a **challenge exam**.

Tools of the Trade: How It Works

PLAR methods provide an opportunity to show people what you know in different ways.

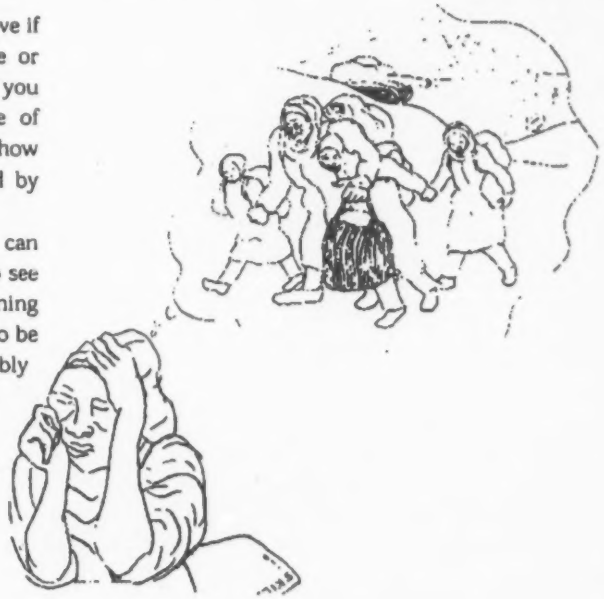
OBJECTIVES	HOW?
self discovery	life stories
recognition	diaries
personal development	detailed resumes
career development	work log
jobs	portfolio
promotion	personal records
program or course admission	professional/technical records
academic credit or equivalency	challenge exams

demonstration	☛	show	assignment	☛	apply
oral discussion	☛	describe	project	☛	create

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

It is hard enough to get the credit you deserve if you do not have an official certificate, degree or diploma to show what you know and can do. If you received your education and training outside of Canada, you have probably already discovered how difficult it is to get your credential recognized by institutions and employers in Canada.

You will need to find out everything you can from the appropriate professional association to see what is needed to get equivalency for your training and/or professional qualifications. There will also be additional costs involved since you will probably need translation services. Some professional associations require examinations, for which you will have to pay an examination registration fee. You may also need to pass a language proficiency test.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

SETTING YOUR SIGHTS ON A CAREER OR OCCUPATIONAL GOAL

The world of training is changing as fast as the jobs these courses train people for. The chances of finding a course that covers all of your objectives are pretty slim. Instead, think about setting a series of short and medium term goals. You can prepare a career action plan that includes your future training and learning plans. Taking it step by step will improve your chances of succeeding on your own terms.

STEP 1

Occupational Analysis

Job tasks are grouped into occupations. As you develop your own inventory of skills and interests, you can start to compare what you like to do with occupational groups that use these skills. You can do what is called an "occupational analysis".

Occupational Analysis

Job Functions include:

job title

job duties & responsibilities

transferable skills

job classification

Job Requirements might include:

license

professional degree

diploma

Grade 10 - 12

certificate

formal work experience

specific training courses

STEP 2

Career Path

The next step is to see what other jobs and types of work are connected to what you already do or know. This is called a career path. A career path is a good way of helping you stay on track and stay on top of the changes that are occurring in your occupation.

Job functions are those tasks you perform on the job. For example, a book-keeper needs to perform mathematical functions and keep track of records.

Job requirements are usually set by employers and professional associations. Some jobs require you to have a Grade 12 diploma. Others require special licenses, certificates, degrees or diplomas. Occupational requirements are important in helping you decide if you actually need training and, if so, how much and what kind.

Occupational analysis =

job functions

+

job requirements

Developing an Occupational or Career Ladder

Occupations can be grouped according to the kinds of skills you use and the type of work you do. Take a look at all of the occupations connected to nursing in the example below.

Once you know what the functions and requirements are you can start to map out a path leading from where you are now to where you would like to be in a few years.

Look at the chart below.[4] It's an example of different clerical jobs. You can see how these jobs are linked to "broader scope" jobs and "parent occupations".

1. Clerical Jobs & Training Programs	2. Broader Scope Jobs & Programs	3. "Parent" Occupations & Programs
text processing	application support	publishing
data entry & processing	**data analysis & report design**	**social & market research**
verification skills	bookkeeping & accounting	accounting (GCA)
computer program expertise	computer LAN support	finance
equipment maintenance	computer programming	business administration
accounting support	Internet	software development
communication skills	editing	technology design
organizational skills	audio visual presentations	information library sciences
personnel accounting	sales & marketing graphic design	human resources
	multimedia	

[4] Chart is adapted from Job Loss & Entry Level Information Workers, Report of the Metro Toronto Clerical Workers Labour Adjustment Committee, July 1995.

If you look at the highlighted examples in each column you'll see how you might start as a data entry person and move from there to doing data analysis. From there you can move into market research. There are lots of steps in between. Training will help you fill in those steps.

You can also look at where your skill or competency level lies. There are three general levels. They are: foundation, intermediate and advanced.

Trainers and educators who specialize in teaching these skills set standards that students have to meet by the time they complete the course. Employers establish their own standards for the workplace. Professional associations also set standards that must be met to get certification for completing training. You can find out what your general standing is and the decide from there on any further training. Once you know what level you are at, it becomes easier to develop a career or occupational path.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

Do I need to upgrade my existing skills? Can I build on what I already know?

Do I need to learn new skills? Am I changing occupations? Has my most recent occupation/job changed so much that I need to start over again?

Should I broaden the range of my current skills to include new areas? Has my most recent job been reorganized to include entirely new areas of work?

[5] Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues, Future of Women's Training, 1997: 25

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS: GETTING TO KNOW THE LABOUR MARKET

Whether you already have a job or are trying to find one, there are some things you will need to know about the labour market in order to make sure you get the right kind of training. Many programs link training and job search, so that taking the course will help prepare you for a job in a certain field or occupation.

The labour market is a hard place to get into and once you're there, it can be a hard place to stay. Younger people are having the toughest time of all: the rate of youth unemployment is twice that of all other people. Many of us have found our jobs changed permanently or eliminated altogether by technological innovations like optical scanners or automatic teller machines (ATMs).

The Ontario provincial economy is closely linked to the economies of the United States and those of other countries. This is often what is meant when people talk about global competition. Not that this is new. But things are happening a lot more quickly than they used to. Almost overnight, a manufacturing company might move one of its product lines from southern Ontario to Mexico. Then again, the opposite is also true. New jobs can be created because a new facility has opened up in your community. So what does all of this mean? More of the same. Change, change and more change. It means that the job market can be a volatile place to be, depending on where you are located.

You have probably heard the term "inflation". Who hasn't? Have you ever wondered what it really means? Inflation occurs when the face value of money goes way up, while its real value — what you can actually buy with it — goes down. So, if the price of a pair of shoes triples in value over 5 years, but the quality stays the same or drops, then we say the price is inflated.

Something similar has been happening in the job market. We call it "credential inflation". People need more and more credentials and qualifications for most jobs. Technological innovations are "bidding up" entry qualifications – the list of credentials you need to get into the job market. It's like playing a game of monopoly. Ten years ago, you needed $500 to play the game. Now you need $1000 if you want to get your player on the board. There are many reasons for this.

We said that technological changes have redesigned many jobs and workplaces. Things like robotics, automatic process control used in inventory systems, new information technologies used in many offices, computer-assisted design and manufacturing. You can learn about all these things. But you need to start somewhere. And if you are not in the labour market, you will need some help.

The other way of looking at it is to think about the kind of job you want and about the type of working conditions you are likely to face. Here are some important things to consider:

- qualifications
- employment prospects
- availability
- salary range/range
- union representation
- general working conditions
- hours of work
- health & safety record

Some jobs offer an opportunity to move from one level to another along a career or occupational ladder. If you are thinking about taking training, think about setting some short, medium and long-term goals. Remember: a problem is easier to resolve if you break it down into smaller, more manageable pieces. Take it step-by-step. Approach your occupational goal in a series of shorter steps over a longer period of time. That means your training choices will have to be very carefully planned.

Some of the basics to think about are listed below:

- finding, understanding & using labour market information
- assessing skills, interests & values
- analyzing & developing personal and job-based skills
- setting personal goals
- developing an action plan

In every occupational group, employers are able to require higher skills and more educational requirements. It is an employers' market. That means there are more people than the available number of full-time jobs paying reasonably good wages.

Since job descriptions are changing every day, it is a good idea to concentrate on developing the basic functional skills that will equip you to do work in a group of occupations, instead of a singe job in an occupational group. One way of doing this is to get an idea about what is going on in the different industries that might employ someone like you.

You might ask:

What are the latest trends?

Are more jobs being created in a particular sector?

Are there a lot of lay-offs?

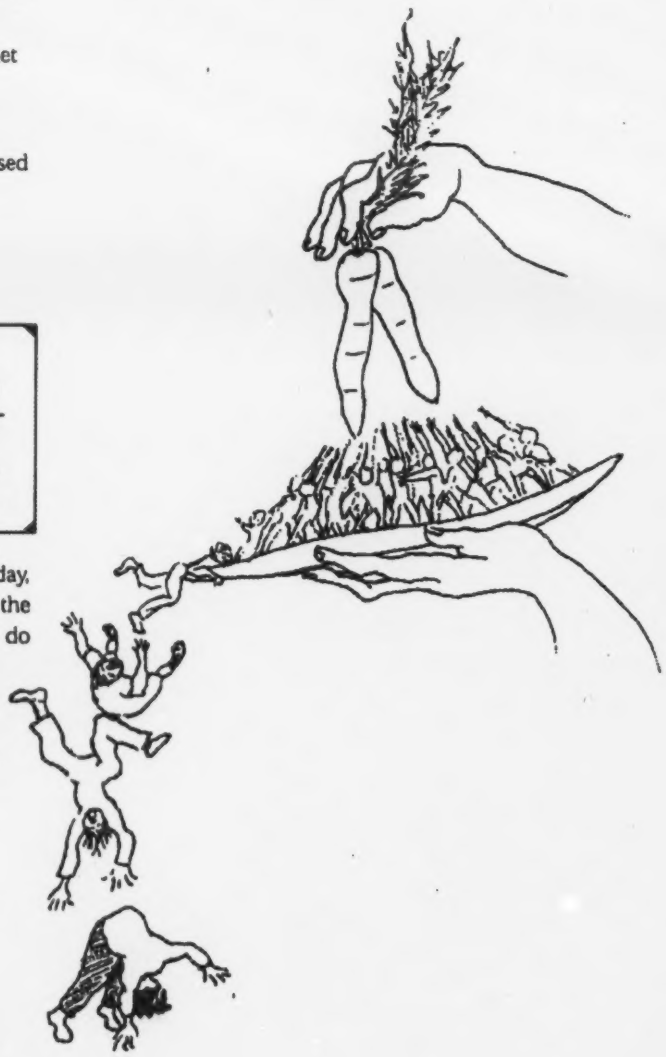
Let's look an example. Say you just got laid off from a local hospital. Maybe you were a lab technician analyzing blood samples. That work is still going to be done, particularly in a highly populated, regionally concentrated area like Toronto.

But what if you live in a rural community?

Has your local hospital been closed?

Are all the health services being concentrated in another location?

If the answer is yes, then you might need to think about relocating. The alternative is to retrain for a new occupation. But are there other jobs in other areas that use similar skill sets?



WHAT IS A GOOD JOB?

You may have heard the expression "good jobs/bad jobs". Ever wonder what that means? Like most of us, you have probably worked at a job that did not satisfy you completely. Maybe you thought your skills and abilities were not being used. Or perhaps they were being used but not recognized. Many of us have settled for part-time work, hoping that we can move into a full-time job further down the road. Some jobs are more dangerous than others. Some jobs, like cleaning and retail sales, can be physically demanding. Others can be very stressful. Most jobs bring things that we like and things that can develop into problems. But when you are unemployed, it is more likely that you will take a job — any job — no matter what the pay or working conditions.

Just remember one thing: you will always have the opportunity to develop your skills and your potential. People are always on the move, from one town to another. From one job to another. The option of going back to school and/or taking a training course to improve your skills is always an option. Sure it takes time and money. Usually your money. Some employers are beginning to understand the benefits of training their own workforce. Look into that option. See whether your employers will pay for some or all of the training course.

Here is a definition of good jobs developed by the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, representing the view of employers and unions:

Good jobs are jobs which are stable and secure, provide good conditions of health and safety, offer opportunities for productive and meaningful work, offer ongoing opportunities for development and training, are frequently organized and provide a just wage.[1]

Does Non-Standard mean Sub-Standard?

New jobs are being created all the time. Many of these jobs are part-time. Others are only temporary jobs. The job market is changing a great deal. There has been a substantial increase in what is called "non-standard" work.

Here's a snapshot of what some people are calling the New Workplace Model.[2]

Core Workforce: These are workers in larger organizations and in the public sector. They do have some job security, but will also find that they have to change as the organization around them changes. They will become "generalists" who are also continually learning new specialized skills. These workers are well-paid, but pay rates will be based on performance.

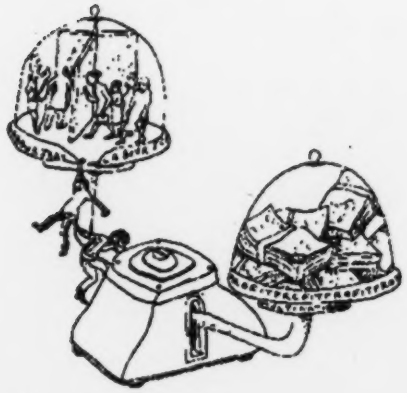
Contractual Workforce: These workers provide knowledge and skill-intensive services by the contract, on a fee-for-service basis. They will be hired on short-term, as-needed and during peak periods. Many of these people will actually be former permanent employees hired back to do the jobs they used to perform. Contract workers have no job security. They need good organizational and time-management skills to deal with the constant peaks and troughs of either no work or too much work. They have to compete for each contract, requiring more emphasis on entrepreneurial qualities.

Floating, Flexible & Causal Workforce: These workers will be employed on a temporary, part-time occasional basis. They will be employed in jobs that make it difficult to develop a clear set of occupational goals or career paths or any form of job security. Workers in this group are younger people, early retirees and those unable to develop recognized higher occupational skills.

As you can tell by now, there is nothing left to chance in how the labour market works. The broad brush strokes are pretty clear: high skilled, decent-pay, some job security and continuous learning at one end – few recognized skills, low-pay, no job security and risk of longer terms of unemployment at the other end. In the middle we find a real mix which may or may not work out depending on what is happening in the surrounding economy.

[1] Canadian Labour Force Development Board, National Training Standards. Phase II Report. 17

[2] This section is based on material prepared by Roger J. Goodman in Alberta Careers Beyond 2000, Learning Resources Distribution Centre, 1996: 14.



Why do I need to know about the Labour Market?

There are some basic things you should know about the labour — or job — market. First of all, the job market and the labour force are two different things. The labour force is made up of all the people like yourself who want to work. This includes people who are counted as unemployed. So when the government agency, Statistics Canada, talks about an unemployment rate of 9%, that means that 9 out of every 100 people in the labour force are looking for work. The job market is the term used to describe all of the paid jobs that are available at any given time.

You have probably been puzzled to hear that the economy is improving and the rate of unemployment is going up! Sound confusing? Sure it does! But the reason is not so complicated after all. During the recession a few years ago, thousands of people withdrew from the labour market. They simply stopped looking for jobs that weren't there. Then they were no longer counted by Statistics Canada as being unemployed.

As more and more people start to come back into the labour force two things happen: the Labour Force Participation Rate starts to increase and so can the unemployment rate. There is not much any one of us can do individually about the bigger picture. But you can begin to understand that bigger picture. And when you start to understand what's happening, you can start to plan.

You will be hearing a lot about "leading trends". These trends are what stand behind many of the daily events that shape our world, our communities and our jobs. Trends occur over the very long term. They take many years to develop and to play themselves out. Some of these trends are demographic – having to do with the population. Other trends have to do with technological change. Still others are about political choices governments and other big institutional players like corporations make all the time. Some trends look like they are inevitable, but they're not.

Take the example of demographic trends. You can see the long-term effects of the "baby boom" of the 1940s just by looking at what happens as all these boomers get older. Combine that with the increasing pressure on our communities and ourselves because of economic recession and you get something that looks like this:

AGING POPULATION
▼
INCREASED NEED FOR HEALTH CARE
▼
DUAL INCOME BECOMES THE NORM FOR MOST FAMILIES
▼
INCREASED STRESS BECAUSE OF TIME PRESSURES
▼
CUTBACKS IN PUBLIC SERVICES
▼
MORE OF US BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR CARING FOR FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ARE ILL

HOW DOES THE LABOUR MARKET WORK?

You don't need to be an economist to understand what the labour market is and how it works. In this section, we introduce you to some important players in the job market. You will see what's involved in figuring out where jobs are coming from and where they are going. And we will look at a few of the reasons for the major changes occurring in the job market.

There are two ways of looking at the labour market. You can follow what's happening to occupations or you can follow what's occurring in the different industries. What do we mean by that? Take the film industry as an example. If you live in Toronto — or have visited there recently — you may have noticed a film crew shooting a movie on one of the streets downtown. Now 15 years ago

you would not have been likely to see that happening in Toronto. The film industry is still fairly new to Toronto, but it is becoming a growing new industry. That means there are more jobs for the occupational groups used in making a film. Everyone from camera technicians, site scouts and sound technicians, caterers and drivers are involved in this business. If these companies hire locally, then they bring jobs into the area.

Some industries develop around specific technologies. The computer has revolutionized office procedures. New information technologies like database programs and networked computer systems have created new occupations. Database administrators and Local Area Networks administrators (LAN) are just two examples of new occupations.

Technological change has also eliminated certain occupations – or at least significantly reduced the demand for some occupational groups. For example, some jobs like bank tellers have been changed dramatically because of Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs).

New information technologies are changing many of the ways businesses do business. Here are just a few examples. You could probably come up with several more to add to the list.

AUTOMATED FACTORY PRODUCTION LINES.

Some jobs are eliminated forever while a cluster of high skilled jobs are created. Plants using computer-assisted controls are changing how much gets produced, and how it gets shipped out. "Just-in-time" production has resulted in the loss of many jobs, especially in semi-skilled production jobs.

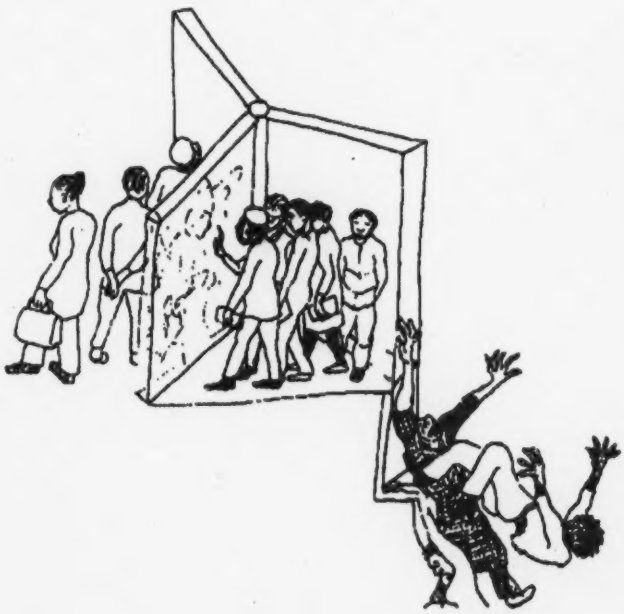
THE SERVICE INDUSTRY IS UNDERGOING A COMPLETE MAKEOVER

Electronic data interchange (EDI) has eliminated a lot of paper-work in offices, and the people who processed those papers. Automatic teller machines (ATMs) have greatly reduced the number of teller positions in commercial banks and credit unions. Voice-activated telephone communication systems have begun to replace receptionists and long distance operators and has led to the development of regionally concentrated calling centers.

Occupations in the manufacturing sector have also been dramatically affected by a combination of technological change and government policies like free trade. There are far fewer manufacturing production jobs available now than there were 20 years ago. We do not need as many machine operators, millwrights, or welder/fitters as we did even 15 years ago when there were more manufacturing plants operating in Ontario.

Companies move around all the time. Some provinces, even countries, specialize in promoting a particular part — or sector — of their economy. For example, Ontario has a large share of the automotive sector. Newfoundland used to have a strong fisheries sector. British Columbia has a large forest products sector. Each of these sectors employs specialized groups of occupations. They also require some of the same occupations. Every factory has a front office, so you always find clerical jobs in manufacturing.

When you put it all together, you start to get a picture of the labour market. The number of jobs goes up and down all the time. That is, the demand for labour changes from day to day, sometimes dramatically like when a factory shuts down and moves somewhere else. The supply of labour — the number



of people available for work, looking for work and/or working — also changes. People are always on the move. Sometimes the demand for labour drops a lot, while the supply stays pretty much the same.

Focus on the longer term. What are the major trends? It is important to make your plans for the longer term, but keep an eye on what is happening around you in the short term.

Here are a few of the leading trends in the economy's mix of jobs:

- strong growth in jobs in managerial, professional and technical groups
- jobs in the managerial group are being restructured
- semi-skilled clerical jobs are declining
- semi-skilled jobs in processing, machining, and assembly are declining
- some professional, technical and skilled trades are declining, others are growing
- professional & technical jobs in health care, teaching & social services are growing

Technological innovations have affected the kinds of job skills needed and how work is organized. Here are some of the innovations in manufacturing that have resulted from new technologies:

- improvements in mechanical equipment
- lasers
- biotechnology
- just-in-time inventory & delivery systems
- microelectronics and computer-based technologies

The service sector has been revolutionized by new technologies. The following examples are some of the ways services are being delivered in retail, banking, hospitality and restaurants – you name it.

- word processing, personal computers, mini-computers and on-line terminals
- point of sale scanning equipment, inventory control and order-entry systems
- local area networks & electronic messaging systems
- automatic banking machines
- point-of-sale debit banking
- electronic scanning systems
- fibre optic cable networks & satellite communications
- computerized voice recognition
- optical readers
- interactive voice mail systems
- desktop publishing

PROVINCIAL TRENDS

Employment in all of the different industries goes up and down all the time. But when you look more closely, you start to see patterns and trends. These patterns are important because they will determine what type of job you can expect to find, what type of wage or salary you will receive, and whether you can work full-time or part-time, as a permanent employee or on a temporary or causal basis.

Most people will tell you to look at work in the service sector. Health and Social services are being reorganized and downsized, especially as the government role in these areas continues to change. Business services are slowly growing, especially as some core business functions are contracted out in government and business.

Manufacturing is expected to expand over the next few years in the following industries: in electronics and electrical products, auto manufacturing and chemicals. Consumer goods and services depend on how much money people have to spend. That is why retail sales jobs are often part-time. Economists expect this sector to grow as people begin spend more. On the other hand, government jobs in the public sector are expected to decline as government spending is reduced in public administration, health and education.

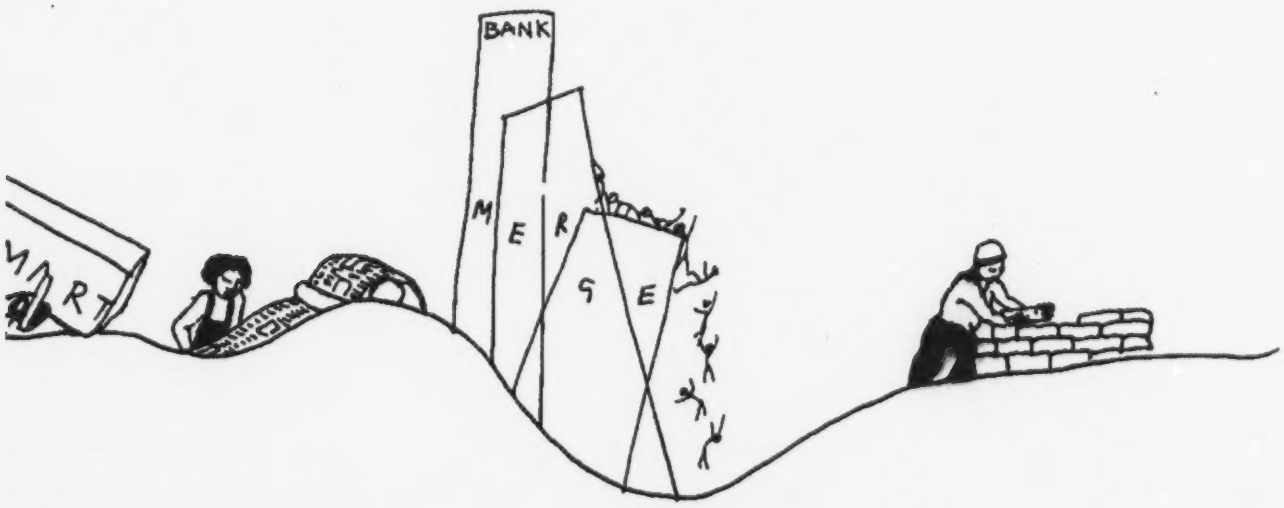
Probably the largest occupational group affected by all of these trends is clerical. Over the past few years, many clerical jobs were lost. Some of these jobs were eliminated permanently by technological innovation. But some were cut to save money. Businesses are starting to realize that there they need some of those people back. But changes in clerical tasks mean that you may need some new skills that you didn't need a few years ago.

Sales and services occupations represent another large group, in wholesale and retail trade, food and beverage, travel and accommodation. In Metro Toronto, tourism and conventions have been a strong source of employment, a pattern which is likely to continue.

Community, business and social services:

Government-funded sectors like education, health & social services are not likely to grow. There will be some expansion in health services in the private for-profit sector as companies from the US move into the Canadian market. Like social services and broader public services, many private companies will take over providing necessary services. Many of these services will be home-based, for example private in-home nursing care.

Private sector businesses like business ser-



vices, accommodation, food & beverage are likely to provide most of the new jobs in this sector. In business services, larger companies are starting to "shed" many core business functions like payroll, accounting, and legal services. The accommodation industry generally outsources management consulting services.

Wholesale & Retail Trade:

Traditional retailers like Eaton's have been cutting back, especially because of competition from discount retailers who, on the other hand, have been doing well. Wholesale sector has been doing OK, based on increasing exports to the US.

Manufacturing:

Here are the ones to watch: printing & publishing; food, beverage & tobacco; electrical and electronic products; and transportation equipment. Slow growth in Canada and in the US make this sector more limited as a source of new jobs.

Finance, Insurance & Real Estate:

This sector is largely concentrated in Metro Toronto where consolidations, mergers and technological innovation have combined to eliminate a lot of jobs. Although some of the bigger companies in the finance sector might be making record profits, these profits have not translated into new jobs. Long-term technological changes make it unlikely that new jobs can be expected from this sector.

Transportation, communication and other utilities are being deregulated. This could mean some job loss. Public administration and related government employment levels are likely to be reduced. Construction industry activity depends a lot on what happens in other sectors. Residential housing construction has picked up, partly because mortgage rates were so low. There are some new non-residential construction projects planned across the province. These large projects always generate some employment growth.

Overall, economists describe the Ontario economy with what they call "cautious optimism." What does this mean? In a nutshell, it means that things are not expected to get worse, but don't expect too much too fast.

WHERE DO I START?

Looking for a job or developing a plan for job training both involve a network of services and people. It is always easier to plan things in stages or installments.

Here are the basic areas to cover:

- career planning
- job search techniques
- resources
- labour market information
- training & education
- funding

These services are available through a number of different access points. Here are a few of the types of service locations you can use:

- **Employment Resource Centers**
- **job information kiosks**
- **electronic labour exchange**
- **Internet CanWorkNet**
- **agency staff assisted services**

There are programs & services that can help you begin your job search. These are called Employment Services and they are intended to provide you with the information you need. Many of these services are free. Some are connected to training programs. Others are available to everyone.

Counseling is an important part of the group of employment services. Counseling is sometimes available in individual one-to-one sessions or in group sessions with other people who, like you, are trying to find work.

Self Employment: Can I be my own boss?

Many people are considering going into business for themselves, creating their own job. Depending on your skills and what you have to offer, this might be an option. But you need to know if there is a market for your product or services. Nobody is completely immune from being unemployed. And starting a new business is a risky project at the best of times.

There are three different kinds of self-employment arrangements: consulting, franchise operations and home-based production. Check these options out very carefully. If you are working in any kind of arrangement with someone else, make sure you are clear about who is doing what and how you are to be paid. In some industries, you can end up being in the same position as a factory worker, only this time you are working from your own home and covering all of the costs on your own. You might find that you have trouble getting paid for the work you have done. You might also find yourself working many more hours for the same amount of money.

Small Business & Entrepreneurial Training

Many people are interested in starting their own business. There are training courses available which promise to provide the basics on developing your own business. There's a lot of appeal in the idea of being your own boss. But it's a good idea to check this option out thoroughly before you go ahead and put your own money on the table.

Community Economic Development

Some organizations specialize in Community Economic Development programs. These courses are similar to small business and entrepreneurial training courses. The difference is that some of them are also connected to community groups that may specialize in working with environmentalist - green projects, or promoting businesses run by and for people with disabilities. Other CED projects are designed to promote diversified economic development in rural and remote communities which have relied on a single industry, like mining or forest products.

If you are interested in looking into this option, ask about getting pre-entrepreneurial training. That way, you can take the opportunity to look into issues about access to credit and financing for your business idea before you get very far into the process.

Human Resources Development Canada provides information which explains how you can use your Employment Insurance benefits to support starting your own business. It's called **Self-Employment Benefit Guide for Applicants**.

You can also check out the following Internet sites:

National: http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

Provincial: http://www.ont.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca
(go to "Programs and Services/ Helping Canadians Get Back To Work")

Job Search Tools & Services

We usually like to go back to the same store to buy certain things, right? We know the people, we are sure about the quality of the product – we know what to expect. If you have moved to a new town, you know what it's like trying to set up a network of personal services and stores. It can be a process of trial and error — hit and miss — until you have a new network in place.

We often hear the expression: "You advertise a job in the paper, but you hire through the people you know." For a few years now, we have seen that proven over and over again. Use every source of information you can think of, including you own personal network.

Who is out there to help me?

Career & Employment Development Services are available from a variety of sources. You may be able to get these services in combination with counseling, orientation and assessment services. These services provide a lot of information which will be useful to you, especially if that information is combined with practical assessment, referral and placement services.

Here is an overview of places that offer Career and Employment Development Services:[3]

Schools & Educational Institutions

All educational facilities have guidance and career centers for students. Some offer work placement and co-op programs. Some include individual and group counseling and job placement as part of student support services.

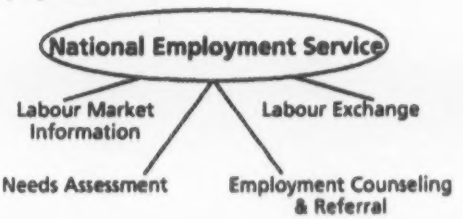
Government Agencies & Resources

The federal government runs a network of Human Resources Canada Centers (HRCCs) through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). You should be able to find one in your community by checking the government pages in the telephone book. HRCCs offer a range of employment services. These are subject to change, but generally will include a mix of public and chargeable services.

HRDC produces a variety of resource materials that are intended to give you an array of necessary information about the labour market and your choice of occupation. Here are some of the things you can find out about:

- occupational studies
- current occupational information
- occupational requirements
- labour market information (up-to-date for your region)
- special programs available to youth, aboriginal people, people with disabilities
- declining and emerging occupations
- jobs bank
- labour exchange

The Federal government runs the National Employment Service.



Some of these services are being shared with — or moved over to — provincial governments. But the main point is that these public services are available for you to use.

HRCCs provide a variety of on-site services. The list below gives you the range of services available from most HRCCs. You will need to check at your local Centre to find out whether it provides the service you need.

- Employment Insurance claims taking & processing
- social insurance number
- public liaison officer
- job bank
- counseling
- automated EI application
- Income Security Programs service agents & resource centers
- Labour Program Resource centre

[3] This section includes material adapted from Canadian Labour Force Development Board, Career and Employment Development: Principles, Strategies and Challenges, Ottawa: January 1997.

- general information sessions
- record of employment orders
- labour market information
- investigation & control

HRDC also provides some limited programs under its Human Resources Investment Fund (HRIF). The following is a list of some of those initiatives that you can check out:

- targeted wage subsidies
- self-employment
- job creation partnerships
- targeted earnings supplements
- skills loans & grants

Ministry of Education & Training (Ontario government)

The provincial government also offers a range of services related to employment development and employability training. Some programs are intended to move people from income support into paid employment quickly. These programs are geared toward immediate and short-term solutions. Training programs are also available throughout the province.

You will need to check on what's available in your area since these programs are changing all the time.

- adult basic literacy/numeracy
- Ontario basic skills
- career and employment preparation program:
  - Information and referral service
  - Employment planning & preparation service
  - on-the-job training
- apprenticeship
- Ontario works

You can check out the following Internet site for some of the services available from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Career & Employment Preparation program:

http://ns.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/cepp/cepp.html

Community and Labour-based Agencies

Several community-based and union training programs offer training on a part-time and full-

time basis. Some programs are open to anyone, others have set conditions applicants must meet. For example, some courses are only offered to people who are eligible for Employment Insurance. Others are only offered to people on social assistance. Some are available to a mix of unionized and non-unionized workers. Others are run for members of a single union. You will need to check this carefully. You may find that some of the services provided by an agency are open to everyone, and only a few are limited by specific criteria. Be persistent. Make sure you get all the answers to your questions.

Some community-based agencies also specialize in providing training for particular groups of people, including women, immigrant communities, youth, people with disabilities and people with special needs. You can find out about different programs available in your area through your local library or community centre.

Private Trainers

There are many people offering services as part of their private business. These include private vocational training schools, individual trainers and training consultants, career colleges and so on. These schools are run on a for-profit basis. Fees are paid by individual clients or their services may be contracted by government to provide services for EI or social assistance recipients.

Some of the services available include:

- internet access
- job search reference material
- job search workshops
- training information
- occupational information
- fax machines
- photocopiers

Employment Resource Centers

Your community may have a Employment Resource Centre, provided for you to use free of charge. These Centers are publicly funded and are open to everybody. These are important resources for you to use. You can get some of the answers you need if you are looking for a training program or looking for a job. All services are provided on-site. There is no telephone access, so you will need to go there in person.

Chances are, ERC staff will be available to direct you to additional resources and services. Don't be shy. Ask as many questions as you need. These people are there to help you in any way they can. Put them to work! If you do not get the information you need, keep asking.

TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES: TOOLS & CHECKLISTS

When you are trying to decide whether or not to take a training course, there are some basic steps you should take first. Take a look at this list:

1. Identify a career goal based on your skills & interests.
2. Research the occupation.
3. Locate and compare courses offered by a number of training providers.
4. Visit the schools and/or training institutions.
5. Document and organize all of your research.
6. Explore possible sources of funding.
7. See a counselor or program staff worker.
8. Talk to your friends, family and/or someone who works in the occupation.

Seems like a lot to consider, doesn't it? It is. Give yourself lots of time to plan. If you take it step by step, it will become pretty clear that you need some help. No single program or person can give you all of what you need. You may need to talk to a few people in a single agency or different people in different agencies.

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Organize your own Action Plan. This will be your guide in investigating training and employment services. Some of the activities in your action plan can be done on your own. For others you may need some help. Developing an Action Plan is a good way of organizing your ideas into concrete steps to follow.

How to Organize Your Action Plan: Self Assessment

- looking at my skills, interests and goals
- looking at my experiences in paid & unpaid activities

Decision-Making

- looking at the supports I think I will need
- looking at my current support system
- how much can I do on my own?
- organizing my schedule

Develop a Personal Inventory:
The Skills & Knowledge Profile

- getting a sense of what I have done
- planning for what I want to do

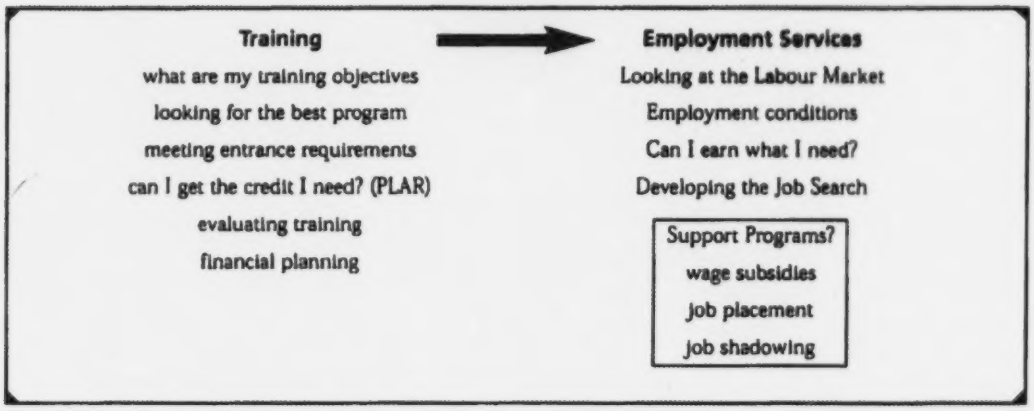
Brainstorming Occupations

- comparing what I do with possible occupations
- making a list of what's out there

Identifying Career/Occupational Paths

- brainstorming about related occupations
- looking at occupational functions and requirements
- organizing the steps

NEXT STEPS:



WHAT IS MY LEARNING STYLE?

This question is not as strange as it seems. You may have learned that there is only one way to learn. For example, did you go to a school where all the students sat in desks in a more or less straight line, while the teacher taught the lesson at the front of the classroom? We thought so. That is one way to learn. But it is not the only way!

Some of us like to learn on our own. We do a lot better working away at our own pace and asking questions one-on-one if we are not sure about something. Some people need to see how the idea works in practice first, before they read about it. Have you ever wanted to say, "Look. You're confusing me! Stop talking and just show me." ?

Some people get very shy in large groups. They don't want to ask questions because they are shy. Or someone else is always asking questions, not letting anyone else speak. And who wants to compete with that? These are all experiences we have had at one time or another. And some of us have been turned off school for good because of experiences like these. That also means we think that there is only one way to learn and that it is definitely not for us! Well, not quite. There are many different learning styles. Many people combine a few different learning techniques.

How you learn can also depend on why you want to learn in the first place. Is this something you need to learn? Did someone else tell you it was necessary? As adults, we do not usually like to be treated like children. We don't want to be taught like children either. People develop their own ways of learning. And that depends a lot on our learning strategy. Decide why you are learning. That will help you figure out what you need to know and when you need to know it. Always ask as many questions as you want. It's your time and it's your future.

The program you want may be available on a part-time basis. This might work better for you if going to school is not something you enjoy or can even afford to do. You might take an individual course rather than a full program. The courses may be available in different forms:

- independent learning modules
- work-study program
- classroom instruction

What to look for:

If you are making the transition into paid work, you will probably need to get some help around your job search. Make sure that you are getting relevant occupational training. Some work experience or job placement would also be a good idea. The following options work well:

a mix of classroom and on-the-job training

general skills + specific job-related skills

apprenticeship or work co-op placement

There are many community-based programs that are designed to help people overcome major barriers to employment.

NEW LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

Courses are now available through "Distance Education". Distance education is similar to correspondence courses. You work on your own. But you work in a group on the Internet. You do the assigned work on a regular schedule and have group discussions and exchanges with the instructor all through the Internet. You need to have access to a computer. Some libraries and community centers are getting on-line to make this kind of learning more available.

What to look for to help your job search:
In general, we think the following is a useful list to keep in mind:

- **training & employment programs should be voluntary**
- **quality training should be longer-term rather than "quick fix"**
- **programs should provide resources and facilities like phone, fax, photocopier**
- **counseling should be available on-site or by referral**

New learning technologies are also being used to develop independent learning modules that you work on in a regular training program. These modules combine classroom group teaching with independent learning on your own. A teacher walks around providing one-on-one help, or tutorials in a computer lab setting.

FITTING IT ALL INTO YOUR SCHEDULE

If you are taking training to learn a new occupation — and if you have limited time — then you can't afford to mess around. You might need to get as much hands-on experience and practice time as you can.

You might need to sit down with the other people in your life — in your household — and talk to them about your plans. Sometimes, we make plans and commitments that change along the way. Developing a schedule that works for everybody can certainly save us all a lot of grief after on. For example, if you are the one who does all the cooking, are others prepared to share this job? You need to know how much help you can expect. Is everyone else as committed to helping you succeed as you are? Getting your family and your friends to co-operate with your plans makes a big difference.

Time stress is a very silent problem that can have serious consequences. Job insecurity causes enough stress. Trying to juggle a full schedule adds to the load. If you know what to look for, you can try to deal with the pressures as they come up. If you need help, you need to be able to ask for it. It's OK to say you have too much on your plate. Community agencies, friends and family can provide help in dealing with the time pressure you are trying to handle.

Travel Time & Transportation Costs

Check how long it takes to travel from your home to the school. Some schools have more than one location. Sometimes you can get a similar course closer to home. You might think it's OK to travel one hour each way for the first few weeks. It can also be expensive and most programs no longer are able to provide a travel allowance.

Who is going to look after the kids?

Child care arrangements are very important. Some programs are able to offer on-site child-

minding. You may need to make your own arrangements. If you are having problems — or if an arrangement changes for some reason — don't try to handle it all alone. Lots of other women face this problem all the time. It is not your fault that affordable childcare is as scarce as it is. Ask if assistance is available.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A TRAINING PROGRAM?

According to all the people we have talked to, there are 5 basic things you should look for in a training program. Here is what we found out when we asked around:[1]

A quality training program will:

1. help you develop the ability to decide on a career or occupation.
2. help you to develop the skills you need to be successful in your chosen career or occupation. This means you should also have the chance to practice those skills.
3. help you develop the ability to look for a job.
4. help you develop the ability to keep a job once you have found one.
5. help you develop the ability to do the first four steps.

This may seem like a lot to expect. It is. But you have high standards for yourself. Why not? This is your action plan. How you make it happen is up to you. If you can't find a program that delivers everything you need, then you might have to take it more slowly. Maybe the first part of your plan — occupational training — will be the first step. And then you might need to go to another agency to get help looking for a job.

HOW CAN I EVALUATE A TRAINING PROGRAM?

Like anything else, if you know what you want to use something for, then you have a way of deciding what you need.

There are people who can and should answer your questions. Make sure you use them to guide you, but do not let anyone else make your decisions for you. Your job is to gather together as much information as you can, fill in the gaps, and then compare what you find out with your own goals. As you get further into your research you will find out how realistic your goals are. You will see what is involved in reaching them. Maybe it will take a bit longer. Maybe it will cost more money than you can get right now.

Here are some of the things to look for in a program:

[1] Ann Zalechow with Anne Morais and Karen Lior, ACTEW Survey of Employment & Training Services for Women in Metro Toronto, Toronto: ACTEW, January 1997.

Making career & occupation decisions

- working on my self-confidence
- managing my finances
- getting all the information I can about the job market
- arranging day care
- learning more about myself & what I'm good at
- getting the counseling & personal supports I need to deal with stress and to handle problems

Succeeding in a career or occupation

- learning life skills like self-assessment, communication, interpersonal skills and learning skills
- identifying and developing basic skills including literacy, numeracy, language proficiency and computer skills
- organizing my learning portfolio: high school equivalency, former training and education, completing my skills assessment
- reviewing requirements for entry-level jobs
- assess my current skills to find out what I already know and what I still need to learn
- identify the training I need to take to upgrade my existing skills
- develop a training plan that suits my learning style

Developing job search skills

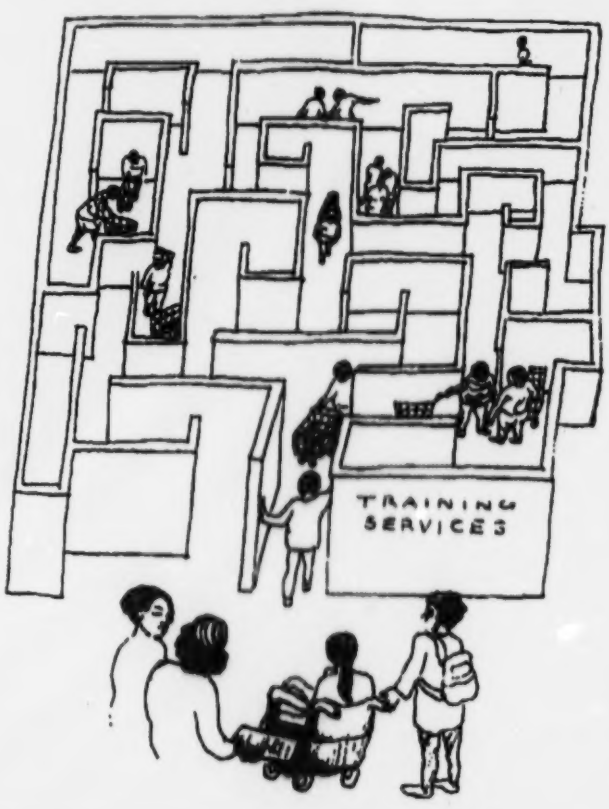
- developing a clear action plan
- applying labour market research results
- preparing my job search portfolio (resume, letters, telephone & interview skills)
- handling "No" without blaming myself
- networking & support groups

Keeping a job

- developing work place communication skills
- understanding & surviving in the workplace

This is like an interview. You are asking the questions to get the information you need. Here are some of the questions you might ask about. You may not get all of the answers, but at least you will get an idea about how the program is set up.

- who usually takes this course?
- is there a description of the material used to teach the course?
- what are the facilities like?
- will someone work with me to develop an action plan?
- what kind of follow-up supports are offered?
- do students participate in course evaluations?
- what are the program objectives?
- how many people are in this program?
- how many people are in each class?
- are new students admitted into the course all the time?
- how many people get jobs after completing this course?
- can I receive college credit for this course?
- will this program give me partial credit for learning I have already done?



- do I need to take the full program or only the modules or sections I need?
- is this course offered only to specific groups of people?
- what is the English & math level of the curriculum?

Do your own outreach

Some training programs offer information sessions for potential participants. That's a good way to get some of the answers you need. You may also be able to drop in and review some of your questions.

Is the program or the course accessible?

There are all kinds of ways that we are held back from getting to where we want to be. Sometimes, once you know what the problem is you can do something about it. Other times it is out of your control. We have put together a list of things to look for when you are trying to find a program that is accessible — or open — problems you need to know about.

- not enough money
- no daycare
- physical barriers (for people with special needs)
- too far away
- transportation
- starts too early/ends too late
- not enough support from personal network

Some of the things on this list can be worked on. For example, if a person using a wheelchair can't get in the door, the agency has to deal with making the place barrier-free.

But what if you find yourself facing practices that are discriminatory in other ways? People are treated very differently because of gender, race, age, as well as apparent physical and mental ability. These are all problems we face every day. They are the last thing you want to have to deal with especially if you are unemployed and looking for some help.

There are places you can go to get some assistance, other people who work as advocates and who understand how these things work and how to deal with them. We have included a list of organizations in the resource & referral section. The most

important thing is to know that you are the consumer. The program is there for you. You have the right to be treated with respect and with dignity.

What is the selection criteria?

Every training program has selection criteria, even if the program is open to everybody. The criteria should be very clear. It should describe the program's approach and objectives in plain language.

Here are some of the things that programs might look at:

- academic learning
- immigration status
- income source
- occupational experience
- hobbies, volunteer and independent activities

Who else is taking this course?

You might want to know who your fellow trainees are. Are they young people, second language speakers, unemployed workers or people looking for their first job? This information can also tell you what direction the course is likely to go in. You may find that the course is more advanced than you need. Or you might prefer to be in a class with people closer to your own age. The again, it can be a good learning experience to be part of a group that brings different experiences and ideas.

If you are not able to get into the course you want, ask why you have not been accepted. You can also ask to be referred to another program or course.

Is there any employer involvement in this course?

Occupational skills are geared to actual jobs. The work world is changing all the time. That means occupational skills are also changing. Employers are interested in getting a person who can demonstrate that they have the basic skills needed to start the job with minimal training.

Employment training is developing links with business. Colleges, universities and school boards have all opened their doors to private business, doing a lot of business training designed to meet the needs of individual employers.

Trainers may have worked out arrangements with employers to do work placements. Trainees are able to get direct training and work experience on a placement. This does not guarantee a job, but it can provide relevant training experience in a workplace setting.

Who is running this show?

You will be asked to provide information about yourself. You may also be given an assessment or even an entrance examination. While you are providing information about yourself, you can also ask some questions about program staff. Who are the instructors? What kinds of qualifications, background and experience do they bring to the course? Knowing who is involved will tell you a lot about the program. Who was involved in designing the course? Were industry experts asked to provide input?

Is this the latest model?

It is hard to keep up with the latest of everything. Some industries — like fashion — change overnight. When was the last time you spent a lot of money for a coat that went out of style before you had even finished paying it off on your credit card! But don't let anyone tell you it doesn't matter. Some products carry safety features or performance standards that have become industry standards now, features that may not have been available a few years ago. As a consumer, you have the right to expect to get the safest and most up-to-date products for your money.

It's the same when you are considering a training course. There is not much point to learning a computer application no one uses anymore. If you are looking at a training program that still uses old equipment, while charging the top rate, you should probably look somewhere else. If you need occupational training, you need to learn the industry standard. And you need to make sure that the training course will teach you the latest techniques. Basic skills training is one thing. But occupational training needs to be up-to-date.

How long have they been in business?

This won't tell you all that much, but it is important to know. It is important to avoid the fly-by-night training operators who are here today and gone — with your money — tomorrow. Even programs that are getting public money from government sponsorship can provide an inferior product. You wouldn't buy anything from someone you thought was trying to rip you off, right? At least not knowingly. Be as careful when it's your own training and employment future. Referrals and references are very important. There are some organizations listed in the Resource section that can tell you how long a program has been around. Find out.

Do I need the training to get a job?

When you develop an action plan you can start to get an idea about what you want to do. Once you start researching different occupations, you can start to see how much you already know. A reputable trainer should be able to tell you honestly whether you will benefit from taking a course or not. You do not want to take something you really don't need.

Do I need to take the whole program?

It is always nice to start at the very beginning and go through the whole process. Like watching a movie or reading a novel again, you might see things or think about things that did not occur to you the first time around. But you may not have the time or the money. That is where things like Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition come in. Although a training program may not have a developed PLAR process, there might be some appropriate way of recognizing and accrediting previous learning experiences.

How can I pay for this course?

We are all a bit uncertain about how to pay for what we need from a shrinking pot. But there are strategies. Some income support is available for those who qualify. You may need to borrow, but will need to be very careful about this option. If you want to go to a college or a registered private vocational trainer, you can apply for OSAP. You may need to go part-time. These are tough questions and involve hard decisions. You can ask to be referred to someone who can work on coming up with answers.

Here are some of the possible sources of funding:

Federal	Skills Loans & Grants Income support – EI (very limited)
Provincial	OSAP (college, university & registered institutions) Apprenticeship Income support – Ontario Works

Other possibilities like on-the-job training, work placements and work-study programs are available but are more difficult to organize on your own.

You can find out whether the training course includes any of the following:

- work experience
- job shadowing
- job placement

Do I need to start at the very beginning?

Depending on your occupational plans, you may need to start training all over again, to try to get an entry-level position in a new occupation. This is why it is so important to develop an Action Plan and a career or occupational path. With help, you can decide where to start. At the beginning? In the middle? Somewhere in-between?

I have found the course I want but I'm not eligible. Now what do I do?

Not every program can provide you with referrals, but you should always ask. It could be that a course has not made its entrance criteria clear and that you are really eligible. There may be a very similar course available in the same place, or at another agency. Most community agencies are closely linked and can refer you to another organization. Never accept a complete and absolute "No" for an answer. You are not breaking any laws by asking for information – or for help!

TRAINING STANDARDS

What you look for in a training program depends on why you are taking training in the first place. Every training program has program goals and objectives. Each course should have its own course objectives. These objectives are sometimes called learning outcomes – things a student should know and/or be able to do by the time the course is finished.

Training providers, like most of us, are people who are committed to their work. And you are committed to yourself. So you need to decide what you can realistically expect from a training course.

What are the goals of the course?

- Is the course designed to teach basic occupational skills?

- Is the course designed to move people from welfare or EI into a short-term job placement?
- Will the course teach me how to do general office administration? Is there any employer involvement in designing the course content?
- Can I get any credit for this course?

Here is a list of standards that we think go into making a good training program.

EFFECTIVE

If a course says you will learn how to do something, then that is what you should expect. If you are not learning, then something is not working right for you. Your responsibility is to give yourself every opportunity to learn. It's up to the people providing the course to make sure you are able to learn in the conditions that work best for you.

AFFORDABLE

Most people have to pay for their own training. That means you need a course that provides the best quality and content for the most affordable price. If you can find a course that offers the same content in fewer weeks for a lower price, you should probably consider taking that one.

ACCESSIBLE

You should have access to all the equipment and materials you need at the training centre. If you are told that students are expected to buy their own computer at the end of the course, think twice before you sign up.

Many agencies get money from the government to deliver courses. You may have to pay a fee, but make sure you are not being overcharged. Shop around. Call as many other places as you like until you are satisfied that you are getting a fair deal.

Do you have to pay for childcare? Do you need transportation? Are you expected to provide your own supplies? These are all additional costs you need to think about.

QUALITY

Any course that provides occupational training should be up-to-date. You want to learn about the occupations that are out there now, not the jobs of 10 years ago. Keep asking if you will be learning about current industry standards. Find out about the instructors. Do they have relevant industry experience or connections? You can always ask around, talk to your friends, family, anybody you can think of – just make sure that the course is training up to today's expectations.

PORTABLE

Have you ever learned how to do something and then found that you could use that skill to do something else? For example, most companies run their receiving departments pretty much the same way. Inventory control systems are usually organized in the same way. So are patient admitting systems in a hospital. Some restaurants might run their seating and serving arrangements differently, but adding up the cash at the end of a shift works the same no matter where you are. Either it balances or it doesn't!

These are all examples of knowledge — basic know-how really — and skills that can be transferred from one job to another. So we call them transferable or core skills.

You need to think about how much of what you will be learning involves skills you can take from one job to another. We think that about 30% of the course content should be teaching transferable skills.

SEQUENTIAL/LADDERED

Everything should lead to something else. If you are going to develop a career or occupational path, you should be able to move from one step to the next. You should never have to double back and start all over again.

The training you want will be able to take you through to the next phase. That way you can plan for the future, always moving toward your final goal. People call this "laddering". Now you don't need to be moving up, although moving into a higher wage/salary range is something many people want to do. You may not want all the extra responsibility unless the pay makes it worthwhile. But the real point is that you can remain on the career or occupational path you have set for yourself.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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Lior, Karen Charnow and D'Arcy Martin, Skills and Knowledge Profile, Learning Capacities in Community and Workplace: An Action Research Project. Advocates for Community-Based Training and Education for Women, 1998.

Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues, Future of Women's Training, 1997.

Zelechow, Ann with Anne Morais and Karen Lior, ACTEW Survey of Employment and Training Services for Women in Metro Toronto, 1997.

RESOURCES:

The following organizations are members of the Women's Skills Network. They provide a wide range of advocacy, training and employment services.

Advocates for Community Based Training and Education for Women, ACTEW
401 Richmond Street West, Suite 355,
Toronto M5V 3A8
info@actew.org
web site: http://www.actew.org
(416) 599-3590 (phone)

Clerical Workers Centre
365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1802,
Toronto M4W 3L4
(416) 415-4610

COSTI - Job Search Training
700 Caledonia Road, Toronto M6B 4H9
(416) 789-7925

Dixon Hall Step-Up
58 Sumach Street, Toronto M5A 3J7 (416) 864-1511

Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre
2221 Yonge Street, Suite 201, Toronto
(416) 488-0084

Jewish Vocational Services
74 Tycos Drive, Toronto M6B 1V9 (416) 787-1151

Opportunity for Advancement
801 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto M5N 1E3
(416) 787-1481

Rexdale Microskills
1 Vulcan Street, Etobicoke M9W 1L3
(416) 247-4879

Times Change
365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1704, Toronto M4W 3L4
(416) 927-1900

Working Skills Centre
604 King Street West, 3rd floor, Toronto M5V 1M6
(416) 703-7770

Working Women Community Centre
533A Gladstone Avenue, Toronto M6H 3J1
(416) 532-2824

YWCA Focus on Change
Etobicoke North Thistletown Collegiate
20 Fordwich Crescent, Etobicoke M9W 2T4
(416) 394-7611

YWCA LEAP
2865 Kingston Road, Suite 201,
Scarborough M1M 1P1 (416) 269-0090

YWCA Working Skills for Women
590 Jarvis Street, 5th floor, Toronto M4Y 2J4
(416) 964-3883

The following Internet sites provide employment training and job search assistance:

Human Resources Development
Canada Electronic Labour Exchange
http://ele.ingenia.com/

Canada WorkInfoNet http://www.workinfonet.ca/

Canada Employment Weekly
http://www.mediacorp2.com/

Toronto/York Region Interactive Training Inventory
http://www.trainingiti.com

or contact
The Possibilities Project (416) 392-4569 (ph)
poss@web.net